

South Gloucestershire **Local Plan** **Policies, Sites and Places Plan**

Background Evidence: Minerals

May 2015

Policies, Sites and Places Plan – Minerals policies

Introduction

1. Aggregates are the most commonly used minerals in the UK and are essential to a modern economy. They provide the critical raw material for built development and other construction, manufacturing and the maintenance of infrastructure, through their use as concrete, mortar, finishes, roadstone, constructional fill and railway ballast.
2. Aggregates can refer to any granular material formed from a natural rock substance, although principally aggregate minerals are sand and gravel and crushed rock. They come in a variety of forms, each with their own characteristics and properties, which determines their many uses.
3. There are three sources of supply of aggregates – primary, secondary and recycled. The majority of aggregate demand is met from primary sources. This involves extracting material directly from the ground and dredging from the sea floor. There are significant geographical imbalances in the occurrence of suitable natural aggregate resources and the areas where they are most needed.
4. Within the West of England (WoE) primary aggregate, in the form of crushed rock, is worked from quarries in South Gloucestershire and North Somerset. There are no sand and gravel resource of commercial value within the sub-region.
5. Carboniferous Limestone is worked from quarries in South Gloucestershire and North Somerset. The quarries are mostly capital intensive units, producing added value aggregate products in addition to screened aggregates (e.g. coated roadstone, concrete blocks). In South Gloucestershire, the currently active quarries are at Chipping Sodbury and Wickwar. Operations have however ceased at Cromhall Quarry, which has had its plant removed, and while it has extensive permitted reserves it has been inactive for around 20 years. Tytherington Quarry has not been worked since 2010 as a result of the downturn in the economy. In 2013 Wick Quarry was sold to a private individual. Although there are a limited amount of reserves remaining, no decision has been taken as to its future use.
6. There are no active quarries producing aggregates in Bristol or Bath and North East Somerset.

Supply

7. National planning practice guidance on minerals, which includes a section on the Managed Aggregate Supply System (MASS), “seeks to ensure a steady and adequate supply of aggregate mineral, to handle the significant geographical imbalances in the occurrence of suitable natural aggregate resources, and the areas where they are most needed”.
8. Historically, mineral planning authorities (MPAs) have planned to make provision for aggregates based on the apportionment of the sub national (aka regional) amounts periodically identified in the Government’s National and Regional Aggregates Guidelines. The Guidelines produced in June 2009¹ include a requirement for the South West to make provision for 412 million tonnes of crushed rock over the period 2005-2020.

¹ DCLG (2009) National and regional guidelines for aggregates provision in England 2005-2020. London: HMSO.
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/aggregatesprovision2020>

Sub-Regional Apportionment

9. The South West Regional Aggregates Working Party (SWRAWP) subsequently apportioned the 412 million tonnes between the mineral planning authorities in the region and put this forward to DCLG. For the West of England, the sub-regional apportionment for crushed rock over the period 2005 – 2020 is 79.10 million tonnes, which equates to 4.94 million tonnes (mt) per year.
10. With the introduction of the Localism Act and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), mineral planning authorities (MPAs) are now required to plan for a steady and adequate supply of aggregates by preparing an annual Local Aggregates Assessment (LAA) based on a rolling average of sales over a 10 year period and other relevant local information, including an assessment of all aggregate supply options. MPAs should make provision for the land-won and other elements of their LAA in their mineral plans. The most recent LAA for the West of England was published earlier in 2015.

Sub-dividing the West of England Apportionment

11. South Gloucestershire and North Somerset Councils in their respective Core Strategies have identified crushed rock requirements using the WoE sub-regional apportionment figure of 79.10 million tonnes for the period 2005 – 2020, and extrapolating this figure to 2026. Using this figure, the annualised requirement is 4.94mt.
12. The Core Strategy requirements reflect a splitting of the West of England figure 60:40 between South Gloucestershire and North Somerset, reflecting that past sales have been higher within South Gloucestershire. Historically the other unitary districts in the WoE, Bath and North East Somerset and Bristol City Council have never made a significant contribution to aggregates supply in the South West, due to the scale and nature of the mineral operations and the geology of those areas. It is considered that this is likely to continue. South Gloucestershire and North Somerset have extensive permitted reserves of aggregates and together have historically made provision for the sub regional apportionment.

Planning for aggregate supply

13. The West of England Local Aggregates Assessment (LAA) for 2014 identifies that the landbank for crushed rock in the West of England is over 29 years from the end of 2013 based on the sub regional apportionment (4.94mt) undertaken by SWRAWP. When based on a 10 year sales average the West of England landbank figure increases to 40 years (at 3.57mt).
14. By both calculations, the landbank extends beyond the end of the South Gloucestershire Core Strategy plan period (to 2027) and suggests that together South Gloucestershire and North Somerset can maintain a 10 year landbank for crushed rock beyond 2030 without additional reserves being permitted. This however assumes various factors, such as that all permitted reserves in both districts as at the end of 2013 are readily deliverable, a position which is considered to be not realistic.
15. Through the Policies, Sites and Places Plan, the Council have addressed the deliverability and distribution of permitted reserves in South Gloucestershire, together with other factors which could affect a steady and adequate supply of aggregates. As a result, the Plan is proposing to roll forward two existing Preferred Areas in the South

Gloucestershire Minerals and Waste Local Plan, and has proposed new allocations at Wickwar Quarry. This is explained further below.

Policies, Sites and Places Plan

16. In order to ensure a steady and adequate supply of minerals and maintain the required annual production of 3.05mtpa, Policy PSP24 identifies preferred areas for the extension of 3 quarries which, together with permitted reserves, can make the necessary contribution to a steady and adequate supply of crushed rock.
17. The extensions at 2 quarries are carried forward from the Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2002. These are:

Preferred area – South West of Tytherington Quarry

A south west extension to the quarry is rolled forward to enable production to continue towards the end of the plan period. The nature of the mineral deposit and environmental constraints limit consideration of alternative options.

Preferred area – East of Chipping Sodbury Quarry (Brinsham Farm)

While there are permitted reserves at the quarry, a small area is identified as an extension to the East Brinsham permission area, which will help to prevent sterilisation of crushed rock. Alternative options at the quarry are not, therefore, appropriate.

18. Need for New Preferred areas

It is considered that further minerals allocations are needed in South Gloucestershire, having regard to the need to maintain an adequate landbank for crushed rock in the district. While sufficient crushed rock could probably be won from the 3 quarries with permitted reserves (Chipping Sodbury, Tytherington and Cromhall), these sites are operated/leased to Hanson. NPPF para 145 indicates that competition is not to be stifled by large landbanks bound up in a few sites. Wickwar Quarry is operated by Cemex, so releasing further reserves is consistent with the NPPF.

19. When considering the Committee resolution to grant permission for a small extension alongside the currently permitted rates of extraction at Wickwar Quarry, it only has sufficient reserves for in the order of 10-13 years. Bearing in mind the need to maintain an adequate landbank throughout the plan period and to be consistent with the NPPF (as set out above), Policy PSP24 proposes new allocations which will help ensure a steady and adequate supply of crushed rock. These are:

New Preferred area – North of Wickwar Quarry

Three areas were put forward for extension to Wickwar Quarry, two of which were to prevent mineral sterilisation. Planning permission is shortly to be approved on the smaller of these sites and the larger site is now proposed as an area of search (see below). The third area is a northern extension, which is a continuation of working on the east side of Downs Road. There are no realistic alternative options. The limestone outcrop in this area is a narrow band running north – south and a S106 agreement prevents working of a southern extension. To the north of Wickwar Quarry, the limestone outcrop narrows west of Downs Road, thereby restricting working in this area. Alternative options at the quarry, other than the 2 smaller sites, are not appropriate.

Area of Search –West of Wickwar (Churchwood) Quarry

An Area of Search is identified within which there are potential limestone resources, although these are of a lower grade mineral than at the new preferred area. The allocation will help to prevent sterilisation of the resources.

Other options

20. No other quarries are suitable for extension/alternative to the Hanson operated quarries. The environmental impact of a wholly new quarry would be much greater than from extending an existing quarry.

Conclusion

21. Through the Policies, Sites and Places Plan the Council is seeking to maintain an adequate landbank for crushed rock and address the requirements of the NPPF – to not stifle competition.
22. Based on current forecasts, adequate provision is being made at Tytherington, Chipping Sodbury and Wickwar quarries to address the figure set out in Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy. The allocations in PSP24 therefore help to ensure a steady and adequate supply of aggregates through the plan period.
23. Consideration of further extraction areas will be undertaken in the Core Strategy/Local Plan Review, bearing in mind the need to continue to maintain a 10 year landbank for crushed rock.